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Letter dated 30 December 2011 from the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa for 2011, as endorsed by the members of the Working Group.

I should be grateful if the present letter were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Baso **Sangqu**
Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on
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Report on the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa for 2011

I. Introduction

1. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa is a subsidiary organ of the Security Council established pursuant to a statement by the President of the Council (S/PRST/2002/2) in which the Council recognized "the need for adequate measures to prevent and resolve conflicts in Africa" and, furthermore, indicated its intention to consider the creation of an ad hoc working group to monitor the recommendations contained in its presidential statement and to enhance coordination with the Economic and Social Council. Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, it was agreed that the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, initially established on 1 March 2002 (see S/2002/207) for a period of one year, would continue its work until 31 December 2011 (see S/2010/654).

2. South Africa was elected as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the period ending 31 December 2011 (see S/2011/2). The present report reflects the activities of the Ad Hoc Working Group that were conducted in 2011, under the chairmanship of Baso Sangqu, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations.

II. Report on the programme of work of the Working Group in 2011

3. During the reporting period South Africa as Chair convened five meetings, which focused on the following themes:

(a) Enhancing the role of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa;

(b) United Nations Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council Cooperation;

(c) Prevention of post-election-related violence in Africa: early warning tools for election-related violence;

(d) Root causes of conflicts in Africa: emerging threats to peace and security in Africa;

(e) Recent lessons learned in African conflict prevention and resolution: coordinating response and supporting local capacity.

4. On 11 March, the Working Group held consultations on its proposed programme of work for 2011. During the meeting the Chair indicated his intention to open most of the Working Group meetings to non-members of the Security Council as well as to non-governmental organizations.

5. On 31 March, the Working Group held a meeting that looked into ways of enhancing its effectiveness and heard briefings by Colin Keating, Executive Director of Security Council Report, and Ruhakana Rugunda, Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations and the immediate past Chair of the

Ad Hoc Working Group. The focus of the meeting was on ways the Working Group could improve its monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations contained in its mandates, and how the Security Council could best actualize or concretize the recommendations, as well as the frequency of the reporting. Several recommendations on the working methods of the Working Group resulted from this meeting, the most notable being that the Council could give experts the task of tracking and monitoring the implementation of Council resolutions and other outcomes concerning peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution and mediation in Africa and to submit recommendations to the Council.

6. Importantly, it was observed that the Working Group had to revitalize its work. In addition, there were suggestions that the interest of the Security Council in the activities of the Working Group seemed to have diminished, a point borne out by the fact that meetings of the Working Group were rarely attended by the Council's ambassadors or their deputies. In an effort to rejuvenate the Working Group, South Africa expressed its keenness to open up the Group's work to participation by non-members of the Council, ideally at more senior levels. Nonetheless, the main challenge of the Working Group, it seems, has been the lack of focus on engendering peace through concerted conflict prevention activities and by developing a more strategic approach to conflict prevention, rather than pursuing the present reactive methods.

A. Cooperation between the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council

7. On 3 May, the Working Group held an interactive dialogue between the members of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa and the Permanent Representatives of the United Nations serving on the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on cooperation between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council. The Working Group heard briefings by panellists Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; Joanna Weschler, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Research of Security Council Report; and Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

8. During this interactive session, it was highlighted that a positive environment existed on which the Security Council could build to further enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union had contributed to the development of the peace and security architecture in Africa. It had also led to the forging of an unprecedented partnership with the United Nations resulting in the establishment of the hybrid peacekeeping arrangement in Darfur and close collaboration and support of the African Union Mission in Somalia. The Peace and Security Council had also at a doctrinal level established a framework to deal with unconstitutional changes of government on the African continent.

9. The cooperation between the secretariats of the United Nations and the African Union remained crucial, but there was a need for closer interaction. Such a relationship was imperative in order to fulfil the Security Council's primary responsibility of maintaining peace and security. However, there should be more

focus on cooperation and regional organizations as envisaged in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, as well.

10. Furthermore, as the United Nations was currently overstretched, as well as under pressure from the global economic downturn, it was felt that some burden-sharing was inevitable, since the United Nations would singularly be unable to cover all the unmet needs of Africa in the area of conflict prevention. As such, partnership with the African continent would have the highest impact. Although both the United Nations and the African Union had made positive strides, greater political coherence and joint action by the two Councils would be crucial.

11. The necessity of further enhancing the close cooperation between the two organizations in fostering peace was underlined. The way the two organizations jointly dealt with the political crisis in Guinea was cited as a testament to this fact. Furthermore, it was felt that the annual missions by the Security Council to Africa and its annual joint consultative meeting with the Peace and Security Council had assisted in strengthening the various dimensions of the United Nations/African Union partnership, including conflict prevention and resolution. It was highlighted as noteworthy and important that the African Union remained the only organization that the Security Council visited regularly and that spent time discussing the African issues on its agenda. It was in this context that it was recommended that the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council meet frequently, as Africa remained a priority for the Council and indeed occupied a significant part of its agenda.

12. The relationship between the Peace and Security Council and the Security Council had recorded some achievements, such as the establishment of the mediation strategy, United Nations support for the African Union Panel of the Wise and the establishment of electoral structures, as well as the upgrading of the United Nations Office to the African Union to senior-level representation.

Recommendations/observations

13. The recommendations and observations of the Ad Hoc Working Group include the following:

(a) There needs to be a more coordinated approach between the two Councils, as the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts is desired by both organs.

(b) The Chair of the Working Group could visit Addis Ababa to hold discussions with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The Security Council could also look into holding formal meetings away from Headquarters and in Africa, or interact with the Peace and Security Council by videoconference.

(c) There needs to be more timely political engagement and broader consultations on substantive issues pertaining to Africa.

(d) There needs to be more attention to the relationship between security challenges, security sector reform and the tackling of transnational crime.

(e) The Working Group could act as an informal secretariat with regard to cooperation between the two organizations and monitor all joint actions and decisions requiring follow-up.

(f) As the two Councils share similar conflict-prevention agendas, there should be a more strategic preventive approach rather than a response only at the crisis stage, which is far more costly in human lives, as well as financially.

(g) Finally, the two Councils should have more frequent meetings, and joint fact-finding missions should be considered.

B. Prevention of post-election violence in Africa and early warning tools for election-related violence

14. On 13 July, the Working Group held a seminar on the theme of early warning tools and indicators to assess the risk of election-related violence in Africa, with a panel comprising Massimo Tommasoli, Permanent Observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance to the United Nations; Siaka Toumany Sangaré, President of the Commission electorale nationale indépendante of Guinea; and Craig Jenness, Director of the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs.

15. The meeting focused on early warning tools for identifying and preventing election-related violence and how these tools could be used by the international community before, during and after elections. It was noted that conflict during elections was a structural component of elections, so the issue was how to avoid the outbreak of violence. While referring to the 2010 report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (A/HRC/14/24/Add.5) as the most comprehensive academic research, it was noted that there was no agreed terminology on electoral-related killings and violence.

16. However, four causes of electoral violence were identified: (a) pursuit of electoral advantages; (b) disruption of elections through terrorist acts by those excluded from the process; (c) prevention of electoral manipulation; and (d) response to initial violence. It was further stated that the consequences of electoral violence were human rights violations, worsening of the economic situation and a decrease in trust and confidence in the democratic process.

17. Lastly, the following points were highlighted: (a) elections tended to reflect the conditions in which they took place: where rule of law was weak, electoral rules were less likely to be followed; (b) elections themselves were rarely, if ever, the root cause of violence: elections could be a spark, but the fuel was usually long-standing and unresolved grievances or divisions; (c) the technical quality of an election, either good or bad, was not necessarily a good predictor of whether an election would lead to violence; (d) electoral disagreements were not unusual: elections were political, and politics were about differing points of view and partisan interests. What should be considered "abnormal" is when disagreements turn to violence.

Recommendations/observations

18. The recommendations and observations of the Ad Hoc Working Group include the following:

(a) Holding consultations during the elections in order to allow all parties to meet and exchange views, as those consultations would address difficulties and allow a political agreement to be reached with a view to preventing problems or conflicts.

(b) If a population is unaware of the electoral process, it can be easily manipulated. Also, where rule of law is weak, electoral rules are less likely to be followed. Hence voter awareness and education are important in improving the democratic culture.

(c) Elections could be the tripwire for violence; however, they are rarely, if ever, the root cause of violence and hardly as catalytic as long-standing and unresolved grievances or divisions.

(d) The best way to address potential election violence is to address the root causes — not necessarily through electoral reform, but by addressing perceived fundamental imbalances, for example power- and resource-sharing, in the political system.

(e) The perception that elections are responsible for social conflicts and are a cause for destabilization in Africa is not entirely correct. Such sentiments need to be changed, as they are neither justified nor a true measure or benchmark of credible elections. Elections should be assessed by the broad acceptance of the outcome by the people.

C. Causes of conflict and emerging threats to peace and security

19. On 28 September, the Working Group held an interactive session on the root causes of conflict in Africa and new and emerging challenges to peace and security. The panellists included Patrick Hayford, Director of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa of the Secretariat; Henriette von Kaltenborn-Stachau, Senior Economist in the Fragile and Conflict-affected Countries Group at the World Bank; and Simone Monasebian, Representative and Chief of the New York Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Representatives of 29 Member States, 10 non-governmental organizations and 10 officials from the United Nations common system participated in the meeting.

20. The meeting, inter alia, discussed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations contained in his earlier report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/65/152-S/2010/526), as well as the *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* published by the World Bank.

21. The Secretary-General's report highlighted two themes, namely youth education and employment, and conflict and natural resources. On the issue of youth education and employment, it was underlined that adequate access to quality education and decent employment was a vital component of poverty reduction, political stability, peace, security and sustainable development. Thus, the issue required coordinated and innovative responses which would address both the socio-economic dimension of youth education and unemployment as well as the consequence of the exclusion of youth from political participation.

22. There was thus a need to mainstream and operationalize policies and programmes aimed at empowering youth and creating conditions that would enable them to participate fully in all aspects of society. With 60 per cent of the population of the African continent under the age of 25, greater emphasis needed to be placed on ensuring that they received quality education, skills and decent jobs as well as adequate space for effective political and social participation and representation. For

instance, in some parts of North Africa, the large discontent associated with the Arab Spring derived from many years of a lack of both political participation and decent job opportunities for young people.

23. On conflict related to natural resources, equitable access to land, water, biodiversity and raw materials as well as the distribution of proceeds from the exploitation of natural resources were identified as probable causes of conflict in Africa.

24. Furthermore, it was highlighted that 60 per cent of countries identified by the World Bank as conflict-affected were in Africa. The World Bank needed to make its strategies more focused on the fragility of societies and the resolution and prevention of conflicts.

Recommendations/observations

25. The recommendations and observations of the Ad Hoc Working Group include the following:

(a) While there is great risk in deploying resources into fragile and conflict-affected countries, it is important to understand the equal, if not greater, risk of non-engagement, and therefore a need for tolerance for mistakes and better management of risk-taking. Equally important is the need to refocus engagement by identifying opportune transition moments where intervention can best break the cycle of violence and protracted fragility.

(b) Better interventions require assessing not just the capability but also the legitimacy of key institutions dealing with security, justice and development. Providing capacity-building for weak and fragile States, while desirable, is often not sufficient; the institutions set up to address security and development issues have to earn the trust of the population, otherwise they will lack the legitimacy to carry out important tasks.

(c) Interventions in fragile and conflict-affected States require sustained and long-term support. Unfortunately, when governance setbacks occur, for example violence or coups, funding to essential national institutions, especially those that deliver basic services, is often cut off or interrupted. The result can sometimes be an end to education or health opportunities, or a withdrawal of funding to justice, law and order and security sectors such as the police. As a result, governance setbacks are amplified. There is a need to ensure that essential institutions receive sustained and predictable support over several years and that the effects of governance setbacks are not aggravated by the sudden withdrawal of funding.

(d) Labour-intensive growth helps to stabilize fragile and conflict-affected countries because it provides economic prospects, addresses the key challenge of job creation and reduces disaffection among youth. There is a need to support public and community-based employment programmes until private-sector employment accelerates. This requires the removal of bottlenecks to private-sector investments and investment into infrastructure, particularly roads, ports and customs infrastructure, in order to open up new markets.

(e) There is a need to focus on assisting youth on the African continent and for them to be given the opportunity and platform to air their views.

(f) The United Nations system needs to have a more coherent approach and to look at conflict resolution and prevention issues holistically in order to effectively support African issues.

D. Lessons learned in African conflict prevention and resolution: coordinating response and supporting local capacities

26. On 21 November, the Working Group held an interactive session on recent lessons learned in African conflict prevention and resolution, including coordinating response and supporting local capacity. The panellists for the meeting were Andrew Tomlinson, Director of the Quaker United Nations Office; Fabienne Hara, Vice-President of Multilateral Affairs at the International Crisis Group; Jake Sherman, Deputy Director for Programs (Conflict) at the Center on International Cooperation; and Chetan Kumar, Inter-agency Liaison Specialist, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Programme Manager, Joint UNDP-Department of Political Affairs Programme on Building National Capacity for Conflict Prevention. Aside from Security Council members, some 60 participants representing non-members of the Council, non-governmental organizations and offices within the United Nations Secretariat participated in the meeting.

27. The broad view emanating from the meeting was that previous discussions within the Working Group had highlighted that the thrust of preventative work should shift from reactive external interventions, with limited and ultimately superficial impact, to internally driven initiatives for developing local and national capacities for prevention.

28. It was thus identified that crisis responses needed to be transitioned into sustainable support. Furthermore, all forms of assistance needed to be not only conflict sensitive, but also should contribute to societal resilience. Security actions needed to be planned and implemented in a way that took into account their impact on broader efforts towards inclusive and sustainable peace and development.

29. It was noted in some case studies that violence was rooted in exclusionary politics. In most cases, the crucial question was: how ready can a country be for elections, and how should the international community support this process?

30. On preventative diplomacy, there were success stories, particularly regarding the important role played by the United Nations in cooperation with regional organizations. On building infrastructures for peace, there was a critical need to support local processes. For instance, a crisis in one country provided a good example on how crowd-sourcing technology infrastructure was developed locally to assist mediation efforts. In another country, mediation efforts were also supported by using an internal mediator. In yet another country, internal mediation by church leaders was utilized and achieved significant results.

Recommendations/observations

31. The recommendations and observations of the Ad Hoc Working Group include the following:

(a) The challenge faced by developing countries is that transitional challenges will continue to resemble rolling turbulence, particularly because many

conflicts are recurring in nature, as they are often linked to power and natural resource-sharing, land reform and utilization. It is thus important for institutions to have their own mediation infrastructure for peace.

(b) Equally important is confidence-building and the ability to recruit mediators nationally. Some interventions pointed to civil societies playing pivotal roles in the societies at large, and as such the United Nations needed to be strategic in its engagements, for example by paying particular attention to the strengthening of regional organizations.

(c) The role of political parties is important for the attainment of peace. In addition, the international community should be mindful of the growing costs of peacemaking, especially peacekeeping. As such, preventative diplomacy should be the cornerstone of conflict prevention. This diplomacy should be coupled with partnerships between the African Union, the Security Council and other subregional bodies.

(d) The prevailing view in some quarters that there is a condescending attitude from the Security Council towards subregional groups like the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development should be addressed. It was recommended that the Security Council needed to learn to work with these bodies to strengthen their capacities and the roles envisaged for them in the Charter of the United Nations.

(e) To be successful, prevention efforts by the United Nations needed to be addressed at all levels, from community to government, from centre to periphery, and to acknowledge that in conflict prevention, national capacity is more than just government capacity.

(f) In addition, it should be recognized that in fragile and conflict-affected States, where central authority is weak, in many cases the quest for good governance begins with the involvement of civil society.

(g) The role of women should also be recognized as imperative and every effort should be made to bring critical women's views to the negotiating table at the United Nations.

III. Conclusion

32. During the reporting and mandate period, the Working Group provided a critical platform for representatives, especially non-members of the Security Council, to articulate their views on enhancing the work of the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular in the field of conflict prevention and resolution on the African continent. The interactions during the reporting period were informative, vibrant and frank, thus providing the basis for some of the crucial recommendations included in the present report.

33. Consequently, South Africa is appreciative of all the organizations, non-members of the Security Council and individuals who actively participated in the effort to address the persistent challenges within the African continent and in so doing enriched the ongoing discussions and ideas on how to enhance conflict prevention in Africa and globally.

34. Finally, I wish to express my personal gratitude and that of the delegation of South Africa to the members of the Working Group for their collaboration and the support extended to me in the discharge of the mandate of the Working Group. My appreciation also goes to the Secretary of the Working Group and all the members of the secretariat who assisted us in fulfilling our mandate.

35. I look forward to your continued support as South Africa continues to chair and steer the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group in 2012.